

Workshop on the Future Environmental Labelling of Seafood.

Copenhagen, 19. January 2010

Distinguished speakers, ladies and gentlemen!

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers, to welcome you all to Copenhagen and this workshop on the Future Environmental Labelling of Seafood. We appreciate the initiative taken by SINTEF and its Nordic partners to organize this event. It is also a pleasure to see such a good attendance, and that the retail sector is well represented among the participants.

The Nordic Council of Ministers is as many of you may know, a regional co operation body comprising of the ministries of the five Nordic Countries, and the self-governed areas of Greenland, The Faroe Islands and Åland. This cooperation is in fact one of the most extensive regional cooperation of the world. It covers a wide range of topics and sectors, including the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

These sectors are of great importance in the Nordic region, and represent ample opportunities for cooperation, as we so to speak are sitting around the same pond, and the seafood value chains are crisscrossing national borders in the Nordic region.

All the Nordic governments are committed to the aim of sustainable development and this also applies to economic activities related to their seas. Environmental labelling of seafood could become a powerful tool to ensure a higher standard of environmental behaviour in the seafood industry, and thereby contribute to this overall objective. In this respect it could also contribute to the long term competitiveness of the Nordic seafood industry.

The Fisheries cooperation has therefore over several years contributed to research and innovation in the area of tracking, traceability and environmental labelling. By supporting this kind of activities the Nordic Council wish to promote a wide adoption of environmental certification in the seafood business. However, environmental labelling is not without its flaws; questions are frequently raised concerning issues such as relevant content, legitimacy, and marked power of the various labels. It is therefore expected that this workshop could contribute to the discourse on such questions. Hopefully such a discourse could lead to environmental labels which in the future will tie in better with sound fisheries management regimes, ensure fair competition among labelling firms, and meet public demands for trustworthy documentation that the food we consume is produced in a sustainable way.

I wish you a very successful workshop!

Thank you!